Understanding Calorie Density
The Key to Weight Loss Without Dieting
by Delisa Reniero

Wouldn't it be nice if it were true
that you could eat all you want and still
lose weight and maintain it for life? Do
you think it's possible -- or is it just a
bunch of hype to sell a diet book or some
kind of supplement? On the other hand,
what if you want to GAIN weight? A few
of us are active enough to have to work at
maintaining weight. The good news is you
can do either, and the key in both cases is
understanding calorie density.

Calorie density simply refers to how many
calories are in a pound of any particular food. Some
foods have a very low calorie density. Can you
guess which ones? Vegetables! On average,
vegetables have only 100 calories per pound. At the
opposite end of the spectrum are oil and fat,
which have 4000 calories per pound! It makes sense
that the more vegetables you eat, the less calories you are
consuming. The more oil and fat you eat,
the more calories you consume. In fact,
even though nuts are a healthy food,
they actually have a HIGHER
calorie density than junk
food, so our aspirin
healthy eaters may start to gain weight instead of
losing -- and then wonder why
this doesn't work for them.

When we refine
foods, we generally remove
water, fiber, and nutrients.
This increases the calorie density, even in
healthy foods. Compare grapes at about 250
calories per pound and raisins at 500
per pound! It makes sense
that the more vegetables you eat,
the less calories you are consuming. The more oil and fat you eat,
the more calories you consume.

For comparison purposes, take a
look at the average number of calories per
pound in various types of foods:

- High in water content

- Fatty protein (e.g., meat and cheese)......1000
- Vegetables........................................500
- Legumes (e.g., rice, potatoes).............600
- Unrefined carbohydrates (e.g., peas and lentils)......500
- Fruits.................................................300
- Nuts and seeds.................................2800
- Refined carbohydrates (e.g., breads, crackers)......1400
- Junk food (e.g., cookies, chips, candy)........2300
- Oil and fat..........................................4000

Would it be possible to overeat on
broccoli? No. How about nuts? A cup of
cashews is 800 calories. I don't know
about you, but I could easily consume a
cup of nuts in no time!

As people begin making a sincere
effort to choose healthier
foods, they often decide to
switch from snacking on
unhealthy foods, such as
snacks on
candy and chips to snacking on
nuts. Even though nuts
are the lowest in water in them, and lots of
have a lot of water in them, and lots of

Characteristics of low calorie-density
foods are:

- High in water content
- High in fiber

This is why vegetables and fruits
are the lowest in calorie density. They
have a lot of water in them, and lots of
fiber and bulkiness.

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Foods that are the most filling are also:
- High in water content
- High in fiber
- High in bulk

This explains why eating a plate full of vegetables is filling, but making those vegetables into a soup and adding more liquid makes it even more filling.

People tend to eat about the same amount of **weight** of food each day. Since the low calorie-density foods have a lot of water in them, this makes them heavier. So if we eat the same weight of food each day, but switch to lower calorie-density foods, we can eat as much as we want without it being too many calories. On the other hand, adding even relatively small amounts of the higher calorie-density foods can increase our caloric intake dramatically.

For those wanting to gain weight, adding more nuts and seeds, as well as generous amounts of beans and unrefined carbohydrates will add the calories you need. Even if you want to gain weight, it is important to avoid the junk food and fatty animal foods, as well as pure oil and fat because they are deficient in nutrients and fiber and don’t promote health.

Understanding calorie density takes the mystery out of weight management. When we choose to eat unrefined plant foods, we are loading up on nutrients. Then, we can look at the calorie density scale to decide which foods to increase or decrease depending upon whether we want to lose, maintain, or gain weight.

(This information was taken from Jeff Novick’s DVD: Calorie Density. How to Eat More, Weigh Less and Live Longer.)